

**Chris Jackson (MO)** hunted in the Caucasus Mountains in July/August 2008 and got the Dagestan (Eastern) tur, Kuban (Western) tur and the Caucasian chamois. Chris always writes very good hunt reports in great detail, so I'll let him take it from here:

**Species:** Dagestan (Eastern) tur

**Date Taken:** July 24, 2008

**Location:** Seki, Azerbaijan

**Outfitter:** ProfiHunt – Alexey Alexeev

**Guide(s):** Jahangear, Tural, and Taleh Abdulkerimov

I booked this solo hunt at the 2007 GSCO Convention, and was pleased to later learn that I would be joined by **Jeff Meyerl (PA)**. Our arrival in Baku proceeded uneventfully until I was informed of a paperwork snafu involving the serial number of my rifle. After several hours of "negotiation," the issue was resolved and we were introduced to our ProfiHunt guide, Alexey Alexeev.

On arrival in Seki, we met our guides and were told to sort through our gear, packing only the necessary essentials. All supplies were then loaded on the horses in soft-sided panniers that we straddled, as we rode along a dry creek bed and then up the mountain. This five-hour journey was my first introduction to the hearty stature of our guides and horses. One of our guides, Zaur, actually climbed 5,000 feet in sandals. Only when we reached the steepest part of the ascent did our horses actually begin to breathe hard. These horses are much smaller than their North American cousins, but they sure are stout.

Base camp certainly wasn't what I had expected. Perched on a knoll at 7800 feet, it was a stone hut built by our guides. We also had three sleeping tents, and incredibly, live chickens. Our lead guide, Jahangear, was 60 years old. His two sons, Tural and Taleh, were in their late 20s. They were the sixth generation of Dagestan mountain men to hunt this area.

The next day, we hiked around the back of a steep ridge until we came to a saddleback that exposed numerous gullies and meadows. We just started glassing when Taleh found two turs bedded under a rock canopy over 1,200 yards away. Little did I know, but Taleh considered this one of his secret "honey holes." It provided the turs with security, as well as shade from the hot sun. I was told that **Steve Hornady (NE)** and **Craig Boddington (CA)** both shot turs bedded in the same location.

Directly in front of us was a shale slide. We descended it quickly using our wooden walking sticks as rudders. At the bottom, we rested momentarily while plotting our strategy. Jeff and I decided to try to take both rams, with one hunter getting the first choice and the first shot. I suggested a game of paper/rock/scissors to determine



Chris Jackson (MO) got this Dagestan (Eastern) tur in Azerbaijan in July 2008. Chris was hunting with ProfiHunt.

and surprised that he survived the shot and fall, I dropped into a prone position and fired another bullet that connected. He was 9 years old with 13" bases. The longest horn measured 35 1/2".

**Species:** Kuban (Western) tur

**Date Taken:** August 4, 2008

**Location:** Dombay, Russia

**Outfitter:** ProfiHunt – Alexey Maximov

**Guide(s):** Ali

From Baku, we flew to Moscow and were greeted by Alexey Maximov of ProfiHunt. We spent the day in a hotel near the airport, and flew the next morning to Mineral'nyye Vody. Instead of finishing the drive to base camp, Alexey suggested that we stay in Cherkessk, where he treated us to an outstanding dinner before showing us the local sights. The next day we traveled in two Russian UAZ 4 x 4 vehicles for the remaining six-hour drive, stopping along the way to check the zero of our rifles. By the time we arrived, the road was little more than a muddy trail cut through the forest. Camp was located at 5,800 feet and consisted of a steel-walled compound that was occupied year-round by either forestry and game managers, or search and rescue personnel. This area is popular with rock climbers, and we were told that injuries and fatalities were not uncommon.

After consolidating our gear, we left the next morning for spike camp. We drove part of the way on a mining trail before mounting the horses for the remainder of our climb. Our camp was located in a high meadow near a spring-fed lake at 8,800 feet. We were now in the middle of tur country, surrounded by jagged peaks that topped 11,000-12,000 feet. The tempera-



This Kuban (Western) tur was taken by Chris Jackson (MO) in Karachayevo-Cherkesiya, Russia, August 2008.



ture was much cooler than Azerbaijan, and we could see glaciers in nearly every direction. With the assistance of five guides, we split up the following morning and headed toward the mountains nearest our camp. Our guides planned that we would begin hunting in opposite directions. If no turs were spotted, we would climb higher, and then move toward one another. Any turs in the area would be located in the middle and most likely pass near one of us when they tried to escape.

I hunted with two guides, including the head guide, Ali. In his mid-30s, he was born and raised in this area, and knew these mountains and the tur trails intimately. It was obvious that the rest of the guides respected his abilities and toughness. This guy could flat out climb. I didn't know it at the time, but Ali ultimately intended to climb to a particular area around 11,000 feet, where we could glass and set up for a possible shot. He anticipated that the presence of Jeff and his guides would eventually push turs in our direction.

When we reached our destination, we had difficulty finding a suitable shooting position because of the uneven terrain. Eventually, we moved to a rock ledge where both guides began re-positioning rocks, in order to create additional shooting lanes. While they were doing this, I glanced above me just in time to see the heads and horns of two tur rams as they appeared on the skyline 100 yards away. They seemed to be staring directly at me. I immediately froze, whispered "pssst" to Ali, and pointed with my eyes to the turs. Ali motioned for me to shoot. I slowly slid onto the flat face of a steeply angled boulder but could still only see their heads and horns. I was certain that I had been busted and that they were going to bolt off at any second. Fortunately, the largest tur took one more step up, exposing his brisket. I immediately squeezed off a shot that hit hard. To my surprise, he stepped up and over the top, and began climbing down toward me. One more shot to the chest and he fell dead, sliding down the loose scree. Although less than 100 yards away, the incline was so steep that it took nearly 15 minutes to get to him. The massive dose of adrenaline that had just shot through my body now left my legs feeling like rubber.

As we were headed down the mountain, we stopped to rest and I could now also see Jeff and his guides headed in our direction. They too had killed a ram. As we waited for them, dense fog appeared so we relied solely on Ali's sense of direction to get us



Chris Jackson (MO) hunted with ProfiHunt in Karachayevo-Cherkesiya, Russia to get this Caucasian chamois in August 2008.

back to camp. That evening, Jeff and I compared the horns of each ram. Both were 12-13 years old. Despite the fact that Jeff and I shot these turs in close proximity, their horns were vastly different. Mine were smooth and flared wide; the bases were 12" and the longest horn measured 34". Jeff's flared back and had distinct knobs on the front surface. It wasn't quite as long, but the bases were heavier. These turs were substantially larger body-wise than the Dagestan (Eastern) tur.

**Species:** Caucasian chamois

**Date Taken:** August 6, 2008

**Location:** Dombay, Russia

**Outfitter:** ProfiHunt – Alexey Maximov

**Guide(s):** Ali

While lingering over breakfast the following morning, one guide spotted a chamois near camp. We quickly devised a plan. Jeff would climb down directly toward the animal, while my guide and I were to circle the backside of the mountain, where we would eventually meet Jeff. As had been similarly planned the previous day, any chamois that tried to escape would most likely pass one of us.

After a mile or so of side-hilling along some steep grassy terrain, Ali and I arrived at the front of the mountain that faced our base camp. We were now in vertical cliffs that were prime chamois habitat. As we slowly worked our way across, we saw Jeff sitting with his two guides and a downed chamois. Unfortunately, even though we had covered a lot of prime terrain, we hadn't seen any chamois. After congratulating Jeff on his Capra World Slam, we headed back to spike camp, packed up, and returned to base camp.

The next day, a band of 14 chamois were located in the cliffs we had crossed the previous day. After returning to the top of the mountain, we descended down on them. Unfortunately, they moved further away, down into the timber. After returning to base camp, Ali suggested that we hunt another mountain where fellow St. Louisan Joe Crawley (MO) had taken a tremendous chamois. We arrived in the area late in the day, and soon spotted a solitary male feeding above us.

When we reached 8100 feet, we had closed the distance to 200 yards. One shot, and the chamois rolled down the mountain. He was a great old trophy with fully curved hooks. His bases measured 3 5/8" and the longest horn was 8 1/4" in length.